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THE SPOILED BUDDHA

In Two Acts

HELEN WADDELL



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THE SPOILED BUDDHA

A PLAY IN TWO ACTS
BY HELEN WADDELL



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THE SPOILED BUDDHA.

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Belfast, by the Ulster Theatre in February, 1915,*

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PROLOGUE.

(Spoken by a Buddhist Priest.)

The play is about the Buddha, in the days before he became a god : and about Binzuru, who was his favourite disciple, and who might have become even as the Buddha, only that he saw a woman passing by, and desired her beauty, and so fell from grace. The scene of the first Act is the Sacred Grove of Buddha, and the time is five hundred years before Christ was born. The scene of the second Act is the outer court of the Temple at Asakusa, which is a great temple in Japan, and the time is the present day. Though the interval between the first Act and the second is only so long as the actors shall be painting their faces, remember when the curtain rises again that two thousand four hundred years have gone by : that the Buddha is a great god worshipped in his temple, and the image of Binzuru has grown old outside the holy place.

For the rest, we leave it to our actors and your patience.

CHARACTERS.

ACT I.

THE BUDDHA	
BINZURU	His favourite disciple
DARUMA	Binzuru's rival
FOURTEEN RAKKAN	The other disciples
THREE WOMEN FROM THE VILLAGE	
A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN	

ACT II.

THE BUDDHA	
BINZURU	
DARUMA	
RAKKAN	
PRIESTS	
THE SELLER OF INCENSE STICKS	
THE SELLER OF HOT BEANS	
TWO KURUMAYASANS (JINRICKSHA-MEN)	
TWO YOUNG GIRLS	

Time. Act I. THE SIXTH CENTURY BEFORE
CHRIST.

Act II. THE PRESENT.

THE SPOILED BUDDHA.

ACT I.

TIME : *The Sixth Century B.C.*

SCENE : *The Sacred Grove of Buddha. A broad pathway crosses the stage, disappearing among the trees. In the background, a clear space and a low broad stone. Sunlight on the road. There is a sound of far-off chanting and at intervals the boom of the Buddhist gong. The sound comes nearer.*

Enter the sixteen Rakkan in procession, chanting, the Buddha alone and last. They sit in a semi-circle, the Buddha on the stone of Enlightenment, cross-legged in the traditional attitude, the finger of exhortation raised. Binzuru and Daruma are on either hand. Silence.

Buddha. Hear, O Rakkan. To live is to desire.

Binzuru (groaning). O Master, it is true.

Daruma (sharply). What saidst thou?

Buddha. To live is to desire. Is it not so, O Daruma?

Daruma. I have not found it so.

Binzuru (cheerfully). This also is true. Daruma is a fish. Never in his life hath he desired anything, save the confounding of me. Is it not so, O Daruma?

Buddha. Peace, Binzuru. If Daruma were born a Buddha, jape not.

One of the Rakkan. Master, what is it to be born a Buddha?

Buddha. I know not. At a great cost obtained I this freedom.

One of the Rakkan. Master, how?

Buddha. Hear, O Rakkan. I dug out desire by the roots, as a man digs to uproot the bamboo. I cut the thongs of hunger and delight. So was my soul set free. So I achieved Nirvana.

Another of the Rakkan. Master, what is Nirvana?

Buddha. It is the Death of Death. It is the vision of the Infinite. It is peace.

Binzuru. Master, this Infinite—is it in great grey rings that sway . . . so (*he balances his hands*) . . . and the affairs of the world go by like duckweed in a river?

Buddha. Even so.

Binzuru (*triumphantly*). Then have I seen the Infinite.

Buddha. When, Binzuru?

Binzuru. Years ago. Before I set my feet upon the Way of the Buddhas. O Master, it is a stony way.

Buddha (*indulgently*). And what was thy way?

Binzuru. See you, O Master, it is like this. One must first be well drunken. (*Daruma half rises, but the Buddha motions him down*). One fixes the eye upon an object. A small object, a round object. And contemplates. And the world falls into rings . . . that sway. Twice have I done it. Once it was the brim of

my *saké* cup . . . and once the rim of my pipe bowl. But (*ruefully*) when I entered on the Way, I renounced these things. And Master, the Infinite has gone with them.

Daruma (angrily). Master, wilt thou suffer him?

Buddha. Peace, Daruma. Binzuru, I fear thy jest is dearer to thee than was thy *saké*. Nevertheless thou hast done well to renounce the last. For hear, O Rakkan. There be three desires, the desire of life, the desire of wine—

(The Rakkan on the outer edge of the semi-circle has a view of the pathway from the village. He holds up a warning hand. Women's voices and laughter and the tinkle of a samisen).

Rakkan. Master, there be women from the village approaching.

Buddha. Thou didst well to stay me. It is not good that the words of the Law should be spoken in the hearing of women.

(*He lapses into the immemorial attitude, the eyes heavy-lidded and down-cast. All the Rakkan copy him, save Binzuru, who twirls his thumbs and looks down the road, and Daruma, who furtively watches Binzuru. Three women pass, laughing and talking among themselves. They tinkle the samisen provocatively as they go by. They eye the Buddhas, and the girl with the samisen looks back over her shoulder, and strikes three of the laughing notes as they disappear. The Rakkan stir again, and Binzuru sighs*).

Binzuru. Master, why is the Law forbidden them? Have they not souls to be saved?

Buddha. Yea, Binzuru. But it hath happened that in the saving of their souls a man hath lost his own. Hear, O Rakkan. There be three desires, and of them is she the deadliest. The Disturber of Integrity is she, the Entangler of the Upright, the Snare of the World. Let not the Buddhas look upon a woman——

Daruma (leaning forward, that he may see the Buddha's face). Master, what then of Kwannon?

(The Buddha starts slightly, then recovering himself gazes before him, darkened and lowering. Binzuru scowls at Daruma).

Daruma (smoothly). Not for myself, Most August, would I ask it. But there are evil-minded persons—— In my hearing it hath been said that in the matter of Kwannon the Buddha did not practise as he preaches. And I would have wherewith to stop the mouth of the adversary.

Binzuru (truculently). Stop it with——

Buddha (raising his head and speaking haltingly). Peace, Binzuru. It may be that Daruma hath wisely spoken. It is an old tale and an evil. Of that which was Kwannon's life it is not mine to speak. It has naught to do with me—or you. But this I know, that when for the sins of the flesh and her spirit she

was cast into Hell, darkness became light about her—her beauty was very great—and Hell paradise. And the devils were wroth, and they took her, and bound her hand and foot, and flung her into the great slough that is between Hell and earth, deep mire where there is no standing; and the filth received her, and Hell was Hell again, and the light darkness. But after many months, on the side of it nearest the earth I saw a lotus growing in the mire and one morning, as I passed that way, I saw the cup was opened. And in it . . . her body. . . . (*His voice dies into silence. The Rakkan sit forward straining. Binzuru has forgotten even Daruma.*)

Binzuru (breathlessly). And?

Buddha (rousing himself). I found her . . . and made plain to her the Way . . . the Way of the Buddhas. And already has she reached Nirvana. Wherefore, Binzuru (he turns, indulgent and whimsical), have patience, and thou too shalt some day if the

spirit be but willing. (*He rises, followed by the Rakkan*).

Binzuru (*ruefully*). The spirit, Master, yea !
But the flesh !

(*The Rakkan form in procession, and the chant is about to begin when Daruma turns to the Buddha*).

Daruma. Master, I would stay that I may meditate alone.

(*The Buddha nods in silence. Exit the Rakkan in procession. Daruma settles himself under a tree by the roadside, and sits motionless, gazing before him. The chanting dies away. There is a great stillness. Enter Binzuru. He saunters up the road in the glare of the sun. He stops before Daruma, surveying him. Daruma is in shadow*).

Binzuru (*approvingly*). Nice little spot.
Cool. Very.

(*Daruma withers him, without moving*).

Binzuru. Contemplating? The Infinite?
(*He mops his forehead*).

Daruma (*hollowly*). Trouble me not.

Binzuru (*earnestly*). Not for the world. (*He sits down beside him, and waits until Daruma is again composed*). Got it again, *Daruma*?

Daruma. What?

Binzuru. The Infinite.

(*Daruma ignores him*).

Binzuru (*pleasantly*). Because I would give you counsel, *Daruma*. Good counsel. Next time you get your eye on the Infinite, keep it there, and (*with sudden belligerence*) leave the Buddha alone.

Daruma (*stirring uneasily*). There are evil-minded persons——

Binzuru (*genially*). There are. Minds like a carrion-crow. Like yours, *Daruma*. (*He settles himself more comfortably*). Never take exercise, *Daruma*?

Daruma (loftily). For months together I have not flickered an eyelid nor uncrossed my legs.

Binzuru. Bad for you, Daruma. Bad for you. That explains it, O man of bile. Bad for your legs, too. They'll wither up. Wither up and drop off. (*He stretches his own legs before him and surveys them tenderly. They are good legs*).

Daruma. It matters little how soon my legs, or I with them, are absorbed into the Infinite Negation.

Binzuru (eyeing the legs of Daruma critically). You may be right, Daruma. You may be right.

(He crosses his own in the canonical attitude, folds his hands on his stomach and looks straight before him. The drollery vanishes from the eyes and the lines of the mouth. Slowly his face becomes rapt. Silence.

(Women's voices and laughter and the tinkle of a samisen, very far off. Binzuru does not hear. He is so placed that his eyes are on the unseen stretches of the road, but there is no consciousness in them. Again silence.

(Binzuru's face changes. Some one is approaching not yet seen by the audience. It is the same absorption with which he looked on the Infinite, but more rapturous. A woman comes in sight. She is beautiful, and she sways as she comes. She is carrying a jar on her head, and one arm is raised to steady it. Binzuru leans forward, devouring her, but she does not lift her eyes. All this while Daruma has sat motionless, unseeing. She passes, and Binzuru turns sideways, still following her with his eyes. He has risen on his knees, his arms outstretched).

Binzuru (brokenly). Thy beauty—(He sinks back).

(Daruma sits up with a jerk. His face livens with scandalised malevolence. He turns and looks at the unconscious Binzuru, bends forward, and looks quickly down the road. Then he nods his head twice, gathers his garments from touching his brother, and is about to hurry off when the boom of the returning gong strikes on his ear. He nods with satisfaction, and stands listening. Binzuru winces at the sound like a man struck in his sleep; he rises and goes slowly across the stage, his eyes wide open and fixed, like one unwilling to break a dream. Daruma watches him till he disappears. The sound of the gong comes very near. Enter the Rakkan in procession, the Buddha at their head. Daruma springs forward).

Daruma. Master! Master! That such things should be! Our sainted brother—overtaken—of mortal sin!

(*He is gesticulating. Intense and pleased interest on the faces of the Rakkan. The Buddha motions him aside, paces forward to the daïs, and sits down deliberately. The Rakkan follow him*).

Buddha. Now, Daruma, thou mayst unburden thyself.

Daruma. Master, we sat thus by the road, he and I; I perceiving the Infinite, he twirling his thumbs. And behold, a woman passed down the road, swaying as she went——

Buddha. How comes it that thou didst see her, if thine eyes were on the Infinite?

Daruma. Master, I did not see her, then. My soul was as a kite, tossing among grey clouds. But the voice of my brother in speech with her grappled me, and the lewdness thereof was as a rough hand on the string that jerked me back to the world.

Buddha. Of what then dost thou accuse thy brother?

Daruma (*drawing himself up*). He, a

Buddha, has looked upon a woman and found her fair. He is sinner of mortal sin. (*He raises his arm. Stridently*), Let him be cast out!

All the Rakkan (rising, and with the same gesture). Let him be cast out!

(The Buddha gazes sombrely before him. There is a rustle and nudging among the Rakkan. They crane forward. Binzuru is coming down the road, rapt, unseeing, swaying as he comes, his hands balancing up and down before him, smiling a little foolishly. He appears to see no one, is still walking in a dream. The Buddha watches him, then turns upon the Rakkan).

Buddha. Go.

(They rise mutinously, looking at one another and at the Buddha. He sits unmoved. They form sullenly and march out, Daruma alone and last. Meanwhile Binzuru continues his progress. The Buddha watches him sadly).

Buddha. Binzuru.

*(Binzuru comes to himself, somewhat dazed.
He turns to the Buddha, rapturous).*

Binzuru. Master, I have perceived the Infinite.

Buddha. Thou hast perceived a woman.

(Binzuru stops short. Slow realisation dawns upon his face. He is puzzled and piteous).

Binzuru. Master, what have I done?

Buddha. Thou hast looked upon a woman to lust after her. It is Daruma who says it. Is this thing true?

Binzuru (stands thinking). Master
I know not. It was this way. We sat together, in the shadow, he and I. But I forgot him. Master, I saw the Infinite. It was grey but with the greyness of a pearl. Then she came afar off and I saw her not, but the greyness was suffused it glowed like a pearl when it lies

on a woman's flesh. (*The Buddha raises a warning hand. Binzuru nods hastily*). She came nearer, and the grey waves slipped back. And nearer And at last there was nothing but herself in all the world. She passed by, and I looked before me, and saw nothing, and heard nothing, and of what befell thereafter I can tell nothing. Of myself I had no knowledge, until until your voice brought back my soul.

(*There is silence for a long while*).

Buddha (slowly). Thou hast seen the Infinite. It is true, Binzuru, and I would it were not. For to have seen the Infinite, and to be distracted from it by the Finite, by a woman, is to sin against light.

Binzuru. But, Master, she glorified the Infinite.

Buddha. For how long?

(*Silence*).

Binzuru (unwillingly). Until she drew near.

(He stands, his head sunk on his breast. The Buddha gazes before him. At last he turns and looks down the road by which the Rakkan departed).

Buddha. They, thy brethren, demand that thou be cast out.

Binzuru (falling on his knees). Master, not that! I will go down many degrees in the Scale of Virtue. I will humble myself—even to the feet of Daruma. Let me not be cast out!

Buddha. Thou didst see, and didst look away. Thyself shall judge whether thou art of the Buddhas or no. It is not I who give or take away.

Binzuru (desperately). Did not Kwannon the harlot——

Buddha. Kwannon!

(It is almost a cry. Binzuru checks himself at the sound of it. He gazes at the Buddha, wonderingly. At last the Buddha recovers himself, but he does not look at Binzuru).

Buddha. If Kwannon sinned, it was before her feet were set upon the way.

(Binzuru watches him, with dawning comprehension. He gets slowly to his feet).

Binzuru (heavily). It is enough. I will go.

(He walks to the path, the Buddha watching him drearily. Just as he is turning down the road, the Buddha's face lightens).

Buddha. Binzuru! *(Binzuru turns, but makes no attempt to come back).* It cannot be but that thou shouldst go. And yet I would not have thee far from me. Binzuru, thou hast cast in thy lot with the flesh. Always must thou cleave thereto. What and if I give thee power to cure all fleshly ills?

Binzuru. Master, there is no ill.

Buddha. Thou hast rightly said. Thou and I, we know that it is but part of the Great Illusion. But the multitude, Binzuru, that do not know. . . . *(Whimsically).* Toothache—it is a tenacious illusion.

Binzuru (bewildered). O Master, it is true. But how shall I cure toothache?

Buddha (gaily). See you, Binzuru, thou shalt have efficacy in that same stubborn flesh of thine. The small ones shall come, that have burned their fingers in the fire, and rub thy fingers—so—and the smarting shall be eased. Likewise a profound sciatica——

Binzuru (dismayed). But, Master, they will rub me away!

Buddha (more gravely). Even so. So shalt thou work out thy salvation. Thou knowest, Binzuru, that they, the multitude, go about even now to build us a temple. I and the Rakkan shall sit inside the chancel. Thou, Binzuru, must sit without. But all day shall the faithful throng thee. And behold, the touch of faith will do from without what thyself couldst not from within. They will rub thee away, Binzuru, rid thee of thy unruly flesh. And so, in the end of the ages, thou too shalt achieve

Nirvana. Till then—(*he raises his hand in benediction and farewell. Binzuru bows himself, and goes slowly out*).

(The Buddha watches him, long after he has disappeared. Then rousing himself, he moves over to the gong which the Rakkan have left standing, strikes a single note, and returns to the old attitude. The Rakkan return, looking this way and that, and whispering among themselves. They sit down, all but Daruma, who stands uncertainly, eyeing the coveted seat at the Buddha's right hand. He walks a pace towards it, stops, and eyes the Buddha).

Daruma (pointing). Master
 the seat on thy right hand is it empty?
Buddha. Thou seest it.

Daruma (hesitating and moving uneasily).
 Master is it thy will that it remain
 empty?

Buddha. Thou hast said.

(Daruma, scowling and chagrined, takes his old seat. The Rákkan stiffen into the Buddha's rigid pose).

CURTAIN.

ACT II.

TIME : *The present day.*

SCENE : *The outer court of the Temple at Asakusa. It is dusk in the court, but inside the chancel screen one sees the gleam of candle-light on the faces of the Buddha and the Rakkan, and the gold and red of lacquer work. The bronze figure of Binzuru is in the court, to the right of the chancel. He is cross-legged, his hands folded on his stomach. A few incense-sticks are smouldering before the chancel steps, and from inside comes the intermittent chant of the priests. Beside the low pedestal on which Binzuru sits a Kurumayasan is squatting, and reading the "Jin Shimbun." He is in dark blue, with the "mon" of his craft in great white characters on his back. Opposite him to the left of the court sits the Seller*

of Incense-Sticks smoking, and beside him the Seller of Hot Beans, who is blowing the charcoal in his brazier. There are small bowls ranged before him.

Seller of Incense. The times are not good times.

Seller of Hot Beans. They are bad times.

Seller of Incense. What hast thou to grumble at, thou Seller of Hot Beans? This people are swine. They will buy hot beans to fill themselves, but they will not buy incense to fill the gods. Hardly a stick of incense have I sold this day.

Seller of Beans. It is the hand of the gods on thee for thy bad tongue. I told thee that the Buddhas would chastise it.

Seller of Incense. The Buddhas are asleep. They sleep loud. Harken, and thou wilt hear them——

Seller of Beans. Hold thy peace. Half afraid am I to sit beside thee, lest the gods mistake me for thee.

Seller of Incense. They will not do that, O Man of Beans. Do not flatter thyself. See, O Kurumayasan (*he calls to the man behind the paper as another Kurumayasan limps painfully into the court*) here is thy brother, nigh as light of foot as thou.

(*The lame Kurumayasan smiles broadly*).

Kurumayasan. Greeting, O my brother. Greeting, O Man of Incense. Greeting, O Man of Beans.

Seller of Incense. What aileth thee, O Runner? Wouldst thou be taken for the Sacred Tortoise?

Kurumayasan. Thy tongue is as sharp as the edge of the bamboo grass. Yesterday I strained myself pulling a fat pig of a foreigner up the Tori-i-zaka. And to-day I was two hours crawling hither. A—ah! (*He sits down with a grunt before Binzuru, and applies himself vigorously to rubbing the thigh of Binzuru alternately with his own*).

Seller of Beans. There was a young man from the University. He said there was no virtue in Binzuru. That it was a lie of the priests. That a man might as well rub himself upon his own mats. What sayest thou, O Runner?

Kurumayasan. I say that the young man was a fool. It was but last week that the *akambo* had the colic, was swollen even as a paper lantern, and his mother brought him—Aha!

(Two young girls pass into the court. The Seller of the Incense-Sticks and the Seller of Hot Beans and the two Kurumayasans eye them with satisfaction. They stop before the Seller of Incense shyly).

One of the Young Girls. How much?
Seller of Incense (bowing). Five *sen*.

(They buy half-a-dozen. The Seller of Incense touches the pavement with his

head, and they pass on. The Kurumayasan behind the paper grunts with appreciation).

Seller of Beans. Will that be for the Buddha now?

Seller of Incense (derisively). Nay, nor Binzuru either. They go to Kwannon—to pray for their lovers. The Buddha maketh no account of women. What, O Runner (*the lame Kurumayasan is on his feet and stepping gingerly*) art on thy legs again? May the devil possess me if thou art not as nimble as—Daruma! (*The Kurumayasan makes towards him threateningly*). Peace, and I will tell thee a joke about Daruma. I thought on it last night in my bed.”

(The Seller of Hot Beans inclines to listen, and with him the appeased Kurumayasan. The Seller of Incense-Sticks speaks rapidly, with snorts of laughter. They fall apart into the diverse attitudes of a savoured

jest. On their laughter breaks the deep booming of the temple gong, a single stroke, dominant and mournful. A priest, robed in yellow and with shaven crown, appears in the opening of the chancel screens. He makes the gesture of dismissal. The Sellers collect their wares, the Kurumayasan rises, leaving his paper on the ground, the young girls come hurrying from the farther shrine. In a little while the court is empty. The priests march chanting in procession from the chancel, round the court to the outer gates. There is a clash, as of their closing. The sound of chanting grows fainter. Silence. The incense-sticks before the chancel burn with a faint blue smoke; the twilight has deepened, but there is a glimmer of moonlight on the motionless figure of Binzuru. The silence is broken by a deep breath of relief. The rigidity of the bronze figure relaxes. He stretches his arms above his head with a luxurious yawn,

and settles down to twirl his thumbs, contemplating them the while he smiles to himself. In a little while he chuckles, a reminiscent chuckle. He is so intent upon his thumbs that he does not see a figure advancing from inside the chancel. It is the Buddha himself, cumbrous and magnificent and stately, the gold boss of wisdom between his brows. He pauses for a moment in the opening of the chancel screens, moves slowly forward, and stands before Binzuru, watching him).

Buddha. Binzuru!

Binzuru (starting violently). Master! (*He struggles to get up*).

Buddha. It is enough, Binzuru; we are no longer young.

Buddha. It is not that. It is my back. Sciatica. They have me nearly hollow. But, Master (*he looks round, anxious to do the honours of the outer court*), where is there a—would you not sit down?

Buddha. In truth, Binzuru, I am tired sitting. (*He glances at the dim chancel*).

Binzuru (confidentially). I wouldn't wonder. Exercise—nothing like it. Told Daruma so. Years ago. Centuries ago.

Buddha. But not to profit, Binzuru. He has lost his legs. Nine hundred years ago.

Binzuru. Told him so. Told him so. Atrophy, they call it. Not that they were much loss. Said so himself. (*Binzuru surveys his own legs*). And my own—marvellous the Kurumayasans and the wrestlers that come. Come here and rub me. Rub me away.

Buddha (surveying him). I had hardly thought it would be so soon. The stubborn flesh Only another thousand years, Binzuru, and you shall sit with us again—yonder. (*He looks again at the chancel*).

Binzuru (terrified). You—you think so?

Buddha (laughing softly). You are in no hurry, Binzuru?

Binzuru (*squirms. His voice lowers*). Master—your pardon—but—(*in a rush*) dost never find it DULL?

(*The Buddha eyes the chancel*).

Buddha. Speaking as one Buddha to another—(*Binzuru* *bridles and inclines his head*). Speaking as one Buddha to another, *Binzuru*, it is dull. (*He eyes Binzuru very kindly*). How long is it since you and I talked together, *Binzuru*?

Binzuru (*reflectively*). With the Great Cold it will be two thousand—two thousand four hundred years.

Buddha. I would have come before this, *Binzuru*. Many times. But *Daruma*—he never sleeps.

Binzuru. A marvellous man, *Daruma*. Marvellous man. But, Master, to-night?

Buddha. I discoursed, *Binzuru*—

Binzuru. I hear you sometimes. Snatches. Only snatches. Am getting deaf. Earache. So many cases.

Buddha. It was on the first chapter of the eighth book of the Vedas—you remember it, Binzuru?

Binzuru (feelingly). I do.

Buddha. And at last even Daruma slept. (He looks round the court with pleased interest, and stoops to pick up the "Jin Shimbun"). What is this, Binzuru? Is it a Sacred Writing?

Binzuru (convulsed). It is not. The Kurumayasans—they read it aloud to one another. I listen. I am always listening. I hear it all. The divorce cases. And the news from the Front. And politics—the political situation. (He says it proudly).

Buddha. Politics? What are politics, Binzuru? Are they religious? Religious ceremonies?

Binzuru (again convulsed). They are not. Politics—Politics—(he flounders). They pass the time. They pass the time. Master

(*eagerly*), take it, in your girdle, and read it. Tell Daruma it is a Sacred Writing.

Buddha (*wistfully, looking from it to the chancel*). The light is bad, Binzuru. They burn so much incense. And my eyes——

Binzuru. Same with my own. And headache—(*he draws his hand across his forehead and shakes his head mournfully*). Master, they have all the good looks rubbed off me.

Buddha. See what it is to be popular, Binzuru.

Binzuru (*still grumbling, but affectionately*). There was a small one this morning burnt his tongue with the hot beans, yonder. He came and stood on me and licked me. And then he gave me his bib. This is it. He put it on me himself. (*He tugs at a pink wisp under his left ear. The Buddha stoops to inspect it. Then he straightens himself and looks down at Binzuru with immense affection*).

Buddha (*teasingly*). And the young girls, Binzuru?

Binzuru (mournfully). Not for me. Not for me. I see them. But they go past old Binzuru.

Buddha (indulgently). Where, Binzuru? They do not come to us.

Binzuru. Yonder (he jerks his head to the darkness behind him), to Kwannon—(he checks himself in confusion. The Buddha inclines his head gravely, as one who acknowledges information. He is apparently unaware of Binzuru's embarrassment. He gazes again about the court, then turns upon him with a gleam, as suddenly remembering).

Buddha. Tell me, Binzuru, what was it was in your mind as I came through the chancel?

Binzuru (lighting up). It was a joke. The Seller of Incense-Sticks told it to the Seller of Hot Beans. It was a good joke. I was for shouting it over the screen to Daruma just as you came out.

Buddha. That was fortunate. It would have wakened him.

Binzuru. It would, in soul. (*He rocks himself*).

Buddha (*eyeing him wistfully*). Is it a good joke?

Binzuru (*struggling for gravity*). Master, it is a profane joke.

Buddha. Tell me, *Binzuru*.

(Their heads come close. Binzuru whispers amid splutters of laughter behind his hand. Back goes the Buddha's head in a shout of laughter, stifled halfway by the sudden terror on Binzuru's face. They listen. Inside the chancel someone yawns, a comprehensive, waking yawn).

Binzuru (*hopelessly*). It is *Daruma*.

(For a moment the Buddha stands stupefied. Then with a swing of his great shoulders he turns his back on the chancel and stands looking before him into the night. While one might count ten he stands to make

decision. Then with a long breath he turns round and paces steadily toward the chancel, the while he begins in the voice of intoning).

Buddha. Now it is written in the first chapter of the eighth book of the Vedas that whoso hath attained to the perception of the Infinite can in no wise be ensnared——

(There is a snore, gentle, long-drawn, continuous. Binzuru, who has been wagging his head in admiration, is silently convulsed. The Buddha pauses on the first step of the chancel, and turns to look at Binzuru. For a moment he shares the jest. Then gravity falls on him. He stands gazing at Binzuru. After a long pause he speaks, half to himself).

Buddha. Two thousand—two thousand four hundred years. Binzuru, the years are long years.

Binzuru (gravely). They are long years.

(Again there is silence. The Buddha turns his eyes from Binzuru, and looks into the night).

Buddha (haltingly). Binzuru—was she very beautiful?

(Binzuru eyes him).

Binzuru. Beautiful? As Kwannon.

(The Buddha turns and looks at Binzuru. For a while the two gaze at each other. It is the final comprehension. The Buddha turns to climb the steps, and paces into the chancel. Binzuru watches him till he disappears, then relapses into the old attitude).

CURTAIN.

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